

**To:** ZuletaM@cbsnews.com[ZuletaM@cbsnews.com]  
**From:** Mylott, Richard  
**Sent:** Tue 8/11/2015 1:58:54 AM  
**Subject:** Questions on Gold King Mine response

Myra—my EPA colleagues passed along your questions below. Hope below helps.

Thanks.

Rich Mylott

USEPA Region 8

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**At this point how much waste water is coming out of the Gold King Mine?**

The volume of water coming out of the Gold King mine today was about 800 gallons per minute. We expect some variation to continue over time. We have constructed four ponds at the mine site which are treating water by lowering acidity levels and removing dissolved metals. This system is discharging treated water to Cement Creek at levels cleaner (higher pH and lower levels of metals) than pre-event, background conditions in the creek. Over the next several days, EPA will make upgrades to the system to ensure its continued operation.

**Where is the plume now? When do you anticipate it will reach Lake Powell?**

Aerial and ground reconnaissance indicates that the plume associated with the Gold King Mine release has dissipated downstream and there is no leading edge of contamination visible in downstream sections of the San Juan River or Lake Powell. Ultimately, the water quality data we are collecting will define the plume.

**Any more information on potential risk to human health?**

EPA is collecting and assessing water quality from the Animas and San Juan Rivers daily. EPA has compared the surface water quality data collected on August 5 and 6 to screening levels for human health developed by EPA. The screening levels for human incidental ingestion during recreation are based on an exposure duration totaling 60 days, 8 hours/day. The State of Colorado has developed screening levels

for agricultural exposure. The screening levels for agricultural exposure are based on an exposure duration totaling 30 days.

Based on the data we have seen so far, EPA and ATSDR do not anticipate adverse health effects from exposure to the metals detected in the river water samples from skin contact or incidental (unintentional) ingestion. Similarly, the risk of adverse effects to livestock that may have been exposed to metals detected in river water samples from ingestion or skin contact is low. It is advisable to avoid areas with orange discoloration in the river water.

Over the next several days, we will be jointly evaluating data and information with partners to determine when access to the Animas River will be restored for activities and uses such as rafting, fishing, irrigation, and drinking water. EPA, tribal, state and local officials are coordinating these decisions based on sampling data, risk screening levels, and other related factors. We do not anticipate any reopening decisions until at least August 17. The timing of these decisions could vary among local, state and tribal governments based on local conditions and by uses. Until notified otherwise, people should continue to abide by existing closures.